Prior to the introduction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) on 25.12.2003, emigrant workers recruited directly by the foreign employers were required to make a compulsory security deposit equivalent to one way return airfare while seeking emigration clearance. The purpose was to meet the cost of repatriation of the emigrant worker, if required. The emigrant workers could claim the security on his/her return to Indian. As per information available in this Ministry an amount of around Rs. 28 crore is held as security deposit in the Government account and the refund of deposits are being made as and when claims are filed, from time to time. these funds will continue to be held as security deposit and refunded to the relevant workers upon claims filed.

Independent of this, the Ministry has proposed creation of an Overseas Workers Welfare Fund for meeting various on site, off site and other welfare needs of the emigrants and the returnees.

Indian workers in Mississippi

3310. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of plight of hundreds of Indian workers recruited by Mumbai based company in Pascagoula, Mississippi;

(b) if so, whether Government has asked a detailed report from the Washington embassy;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government proposes to take any action against such recruitment agencies which are duping workers in foreign countries; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) As per the reports received from the Indian Mission in USA, 590 Indian workers were recruited and deployed in the yards of M/s Signal International, a marine fabrication company, located at Mississippi and Texas. They had gone to US on H2B visas (Guest Workers Visa Programme) valid initially for 10 months, extendable at the discretion of the employer and the US authorities. The workers were aggrieved on account of alleged poor accommodation and amenities, deductions from their salary for accommodation, food, electricity, water and also non-fulfilment of alleged intial commitment of permanent residency status.

The Indian Mission in USA has approached the US Government to conduct at detailed investigation on the complaints of Indian workers and take remedial measures. The Indian Mission has also taken steps to withhold visas from the main US recruiters involved to prevent them from entering India to conduct recruiting operations.

(d) and (e) The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has suspended the license of M/s Dewan Consultants, Mumbai and M/s S. Mansur & Co., Mumbai, black listed the foreign employer and is also intiating legal action against the Recruiting Agent for violation of Emigration Act, 1983.

Further, action is taken against the recruiting agents on receipt of complaints by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs under the provision of Emigration Act, 1983, leading to suspension and cancellation of their registration certificate/license in serious cases. In respect of unregistered recruiting agents, the complaints are referred to concerned State Governments/

Police Authorities/Protectors of Emigrants for investigation and action for violation of Section 10 of Emigration Act, 1983 and other provisions of the law as appropriate. In respect of complaints against the foreign employer (FE), FE is placed in the Prior Approval Category (Black list) and as a consequence, is not allowed to recruit workers from India.

University for NRIs

†3311. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is going to establish a university for non-resident Indians;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of expenditure to be incurred on the construction of this university and the provisions that are being made for the funds?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) There is a proposal to establish a PIO/NRI University. 'Expressions of Interest' for the establishment of this University were invited from interested Overseas Indian Trusts/ Registered Socieites in June, 2007. The proposal is under consideration of the Government.

(c) The selected Overseas Indian Trust/Registered Society would arrange necessary funds for setting up the proposed University.

Assurance on Pravasi Bhartiya Divas-2008

3312. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any initiative to fulfil various assurances given by Prime Minister at Pravasi Bhartiya Divas of 2008 for welfare of Overseas Indians;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if so, whether there is any proposal for setting up a fund and resource center for the welfare of Overseas Indians;

(d) if so, the details thereof and steps taken for the same;

(e) the amount of money sent by Overseas Indians working in various countries for last five years, year-wise, State-wise and category-wise?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Ministry has taken steps for implementing the various initiatives announced by the Prime Minister at Pravasi Bhartiya Divas-2008 and has already set up the Overseas Indian Facilitation Center (OIFC) to serve as a 'one stop shop' for investment facilitation and the Overseas Workers Resource Center (OWRC) to serve as a multi-lingual helpline for the benefit of overseas Indian workers. The proposal for establishing an India Development Foundation for channelizing overseas Indian philanthropic capital into India's development effort is being considered. Steps are underway for setting up the 'Prime Minister's Global

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.